



SIGNIFICANCE OF TRAVEL LITERATURE AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RUSKIN BOND'S 'FOOTLOOSE IN AGRA'

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ABSTRACT

Literature in this era, is not only confined to one particular area like British Literature. With the passage of time, it is extended to different Literatures of various colours, societies and cultures. One of these are the travelogues, the travel accounts, the notes of a traveler, containing his impressions of the journey, descriptions of events, and observations, the adventure stories, utopias, and philosophic works, in short "Travel Literature". Travel literature seeks to communicate information about newly discovered lands or those little known to the reader. It is one of the most interesting part of the literature world. It takes the readers to the places and helps in gaining and understanding new different places, its culture and beauty. Travel writing celebrates the differences in manners and customs around the world. It helps the reader to understand other people and places, customs and style of living, it let the readers travel to far-off destinations that they may never see. One of the travelogues titled "Footloose in Agra" written by one the India's best loved writers, Ruskin Bond is such one of them. It is extracted by one his Travel journals he kept in the mid-1960s when he travelled extensively in the small towns and cities of North India. Ruskin Bond is considered to be an icon among Indian writers and children's authors and a top novelist. In this work, he explores that Agra is not actually about Taj and historical monuments, it is much more than that, he explores the laid-back Agra of 1960s in the shadow of everlasting ling mesmerizing TajMahal. This paper is important because Agra, from the eyes of the author is still an old city where one can observe India's old traditional culture. This paper is important as it portrays the beauty and old culture of Agra from crowded localities to busy bazaars also it concludes that Ruskin Bond's portrayal of TajMahal is a feast for the imaginative eyes of one who has never visited the monument. Simultaneously for those who have this idea that Agra is only about the few historical monuments.

KEYWORDS: Travel Literature, Agra, Analysis, Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Travel literature seeks to communicate information about newly discovered lands or those little known to the reader. It is one of the most interesting part of the literature world. Travel literature is a kind of travel writing of literary value. Travel literature normally records the experiences of an author touring a place for the pleasure of travel. An individual work is sometimes called a travelogue. Travel literature may be cross-cultural in focus and may involve travel to different regions within the same country. It takes the readers to the places and helps in gaining and understanding new different places, its culture and beauty. Travel writing celebrates the differences in manners, customs and values around the world. Travel writing is writing about places, persons and things in other places also writing about how to travel, when to travel, where to travel and why to travel and advice on traveling, all with the reader's in mind. It's about relaying your travel experiences to others so that they may read and adopt them. It helps the reader to understand other people and places, customs and style of living, it let the readers travel to far-off destinations that they may never see. Whether the traveler is a curious tourist or not, the leader of a national expedition, or a starving, half-naked survivor, the encounter with place shapes what travel writing can be. As humans, being connected is highly important to all of us; it's the thing we need to keep going and living. And, so, when we are connected to a place and experiences that has very much involved inside of a writer and moved him in some way, it enriches us and expands us that is why great travel writings and travelogues has this allure, this influence, this effect on every reader.

Amaku, an artist, points to the benefits of travel in terms of knowledge and he also explains how one can judge the character of one's own town and people better once one has travelled out so one has something to compare it to. He concludes by arguing for the importance of travelling as education. It is no exaggeration, the lessons that we learn on a journey have no comparison. The traveler sees for himself things that we tell other people about. The lessons learnt by someone who is travelling about like this will be more effective and beautiful.

One of the travelogues titled "Footloose in Agra" written by one the India's best loved writers, Ruskin Bond is one such of them. It is extracted by one his Travel journals (LANDOUR DAYS) he kept in the mid-1960s when he travelled extensively in the small towns of north India. Ruskin Bond is an award winning Indian author of British descent, much renowned for his role in promoting children's literature in India. A prolific writer, he has written over 500 short stories, essays and novels. In this work, he explores that Agra is not actually about Taj and historical monuments, it is much more than that, he explores the laid-back Agra of 1960s in the shadow of everlasting ling mesmerizing TajMahal. On his Way to Taj, the author was surprised to see the crowded locality and busy roads and bazaars, he was astonished to see the beautiful kites all over the sky and it seemed to be regular activity there. The local bazaar is also very popular shopping destinations for the tourists. It is located very close to Agra Cantt Railway Station and is also quite close to both Taj Mahal and Agra Fort. It is also close to the residential area of Mall Road. Each year, millions of tourists from different parts of India as well as

tourists from far-off foreign countries come to Agra for a vacation and the local shops and street markets are one of the most famous place for shopping. There are many types of shops like leather shops, petha (sweet), handicrafts, garments etc. The famous leather shop of Agra Taj Leather World is also situated at Sadar bazaar.

He felt that Agra is still an old city with old houses and forts. He explores the beauty of Taj specially at noon when the sun strikes the white marble and light gets reflected. He was overwhelmed by the beauty of Taj, the formal gardens, the surroundings, wall of red sandstone, the river and flowing along the Taj. For Ruskin Bond and for other people who were like him or who were outsiders, gazing at Taj was a breathtaking and enchanting experience but for the people who always stay or live near Taj, gazing Taj is very normal, it is unchanging for them. They see it every day like for example for the son of the gardener, it was the same. It was nothing special for him to see Taj. The author explored various kite shops even ordered a few of different large and small sizes and shapes. He also explored one forgotten corner of Agra, the old Roman Catholic Cemetery which was unlike other cemeteries. It was in a beautiful condition with all historic tombs. It has none of that overgrown, crumbling look that is common to old cemeteries in monsoon lands. It was a bright, even cheerful place and the jingle of tonga-bells and other street noises can be heard from any part of the grounds. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Agra cemetery was considered blessed ground by Christians, and the dead were brought here from distant places. Their Bond observed a grave of the Venetian Jerome Veronio, who died at Lahore. According to some old records, he had a stand in designing the Taj, modeling it on Humayun's tomb in Delhi. There had for long been a belief that this architect of the Taj lay buried in the cemetery, but no one knew where. Overall, Agra from the eyes of the author is still an old city where one can observe India's old traditional culture. Agra is the home to one of the seven wonders of the world, the Taj Mahal and it is a sneak peek into the architectural history with other structures such as Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri and hence makes for a must visit for anyone living in or visiting India. Isn't it amazing how some writers can make you fall in love with places that you have never been to before. Ruskin Bond is one of those such writers. Ruskin Bond's portrayal of TajMahal is a feast for the imaginative eyes of one who has never visited the monument. Simultaneously, those who have been to the Taj would agree with Bond as for as its eternal beauty and architectural design is concerned. "Footloose in Agra" by Ruskin Bond throws a good deal of light to the old rich culture of India.

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